Holding NET by Mission abroad

4184. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA' : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal has been received from UGC for holding NET by our Mission abroad;

(b) if so, in which countries;

(c) whether it is being done on the behest of the Ministry of External Affairs or the UGC; and

(d) who is going to incur expenses involved in this exercise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has decided to conduct National Eligibility Test (NET) abroad also. The Centres will be at Indian Missions. A request has been sent by the UGC to Indian Missions to nominate a nodal person at their place to co-ordinate the examination.

(c) The decision to hold NET abroad is that of the UGC. The Embassy of India, Beijing received a proposal for holding NET from the Indian students who are currently studying in China under scholarship programme provided through India China Culture Exchange Programme. Accordingly, the Embassy requested the UGC for conduct of the NET abroad.

(d) The expenditure in this exercise will be incurred by the University Grants Commission.

Indo-Iran Gas Pipeline

4185. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposed Indo-Iran Gas pipeline was discussed at the meeting between Indian Prime Minister and the President of Pakistan in July, 2001;

(b) whether it has been finalised to lay the said pipeline through Pakistan or it would be laid *via* the sea;

(c) whether Iran has prepared a feasibility study covering both the land and sea routes; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) The proposed Indo-Iran gas pipeline project was not discussed during the meeting between Prime Minister and President Musharraf in July, 2001.

(b) to (d) The proposal of supply of Iranian gas to India is a bilateral matter between India and Iran. An Indo-Iran Joint Committee was constituted in May, 2000 to examine all aspects relating to supply of Iranian gas to India. The Joint Committee has met on four occasions since then to consider these issues including different modes of transportation, route options and related political, security, economic and technical issues.

During Prime Minister's visit to Iran from April 10–13, 2001, Prime Minister and President of Iran directed the Committee to commission joint feasibility studies through appropriate mechanisms for offshore and overland pipelines from Iran to India on an equal cost-sharing basis. They also directed that the studies be completed expeditiously.

Additional quota of Haj pilgrims

4186. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Karnataka State Haj Committee has sought release of additional quota of 320 pilgrims;

(b) if so, whether it has come to the notice of Government that the additional applications were returned by the Central Haj Committee stating that the enhanced quota has not been released to Karnataka; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take to release the additional quota to Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.